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ABSTRACT

Before discussing the development of skills for playing elementary school physical education games, this document lists basic assumptions about children, movement education, games, and elementary school physical education. Four basic concepts, which are common to all team games, are identified: (1) use of personal and moving space and finding space; (2) stopping--foot position, and moving into and out of stops; (3) dodging; and (4) partner space awareness. These concepts are discussed in the light of the assumption that movement skills are the building blocks to successful participation in games and that movement is learned through practice and carefully planned experiences. Each concept is described, and suggestions are given for activities that will develop movement skills that children will use in playing games and participating in sports. A sample lesson is presented. (JD)

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GAME SKILL DEVELOPMENT

MAHPERD Presentation
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MAPHERD PRESENTATION

Outline

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Introduction

I. Basic assumptions about Elementary Physical Education

1. Physical education experiences in the elementary school are the blocks for all future movement experiences.
2. Physical education experiences in the elementary years must provide the knowledges and skills for general body management to every child.
3. Elementary school physical education teachers must possess an indepth knowledge of human movement in all of its developmental forms.

II. Basic assumptions about children, movement and games.

A. Children

1. Every child has the ability to move successfully in a variety of tasks.
2. Every child has the right to learn to manage his/her body in movement experiences.
3. Every child can learn to move safely and quietly in physical education.

B. Movement

1. Movement skills are the building blocks to successful participation in specific movement forms.
2. Movement is learned through practice and carefully planned experiences.

C. Games

1. Games are most successfully learned in non-competitive environments.
2. Games exist only when children can successfully play them.
3. Games take much longer to learn than to play.

II. Basic Concepts for Games Skill Teaching

Four basic concepts were identified which are common to all team games. The purpose of this presentation is to demonstrate these basic concepts with three fundamental skills. The intention of this presentation is to provide a foundation for several different game forms. Each concept is presented and discussed separately. The discussion of each concept includes sample learning experiences for the concept, helpful hints for implementation. All of these concepts and learning experiences have been child tested during actual lessons.

A. Concept #1 SPACE USE

The ability to find an open space, move into the open space or pass into the open space is critical in all team games. This ability is not innate--it must be carefully developed, refined, and practiced. The beginning of this long process is in the very first movement experiences presented to the kindergartener or first grade child. The term "personal space" has often been used to designate this concept in the early years. A common and narrow understanding of personal space is that the term always designates a stationary position. In a fuller sense personal space is always part of the child's orientation. Personal space moves with the child and should designate the spatial area needed for each individual child to come to a safe and controlled stop as well as the area needed to perform movement patterns in a safe manner. This extension of personal space may be referred to as "moving space." As one might imagine the process of developing a movement comprehension of moving space is long. The third sub-idea in space use is that of finding an open space. The skill involved relies on perception, concentration and practice. When thirty plus elementary children are all moving at one time the task of locating an empty space which will be open when the child arrives is extremely complex. Remember that you as the teacher generally have a "bird's eye view," given that you are able to look over the heads of the moving children. The ultimate goal of space use is that each child will be able to locate an open space, move toward that space without contacting other children and recognize the open space upon arrival. The relationship between this beginning goal and the future experiences that these children will have in team sports is obvious.

Learning Experiences

Space Use

1. Stand in an open space where you cannot reach or touch anyone or anything.
2. Move slowly about the room looking for and moving into open spaces. Stop in an open space when I say stop.
3. Move quickly and stop in an open space when I say stop.
4. Move in different directions (forward, backwards, sideways) and stop in an open space.
5. Move on different body parts always go toward an open space and stop in open spaces.

When using equipment, you can go through the same sequence as noted above. You should always have the children look for and send objects into open spaces when moving.

Helpful Hints Concept #1 Space Use

1. Hula hoops help mark open spaces for very young children.
2. Have the children perform non-locomotor tasks in their open spaces prior to asking them to move. This seems to help them recognize the size of space that they need to work safely.
3. If you observe children moving with their arms extended in front of their bodies, this usually indicates that the child has trouble controlling his/her body. I call these children the brave and reckless. Encourage the child to move more slowly and then watch to see if he/she can locate open spaces. In my experiences these children usually have great difficulty with spatial concepts and they need lots of encouragement.
4. Look for those children who always move on the perimeter of the group. These children are fondly called the cautious and correct group. They always appear to be in an empty space because they have seldom moved between tasks. They too need lots of encouragement.
5. The addition of equipment complicates the environment considerably. If your children have difficulty then have one half of the class move while the other half watches. Keep both halves on the floor but allow just one half to move. Eventually all of the children will be able to move at the same time.
6. Stop the children often and have them evaluate their space use. This experience helps them to recognize and eventually utilize the space in a safe manner.

B. Concept #2 STOPPING

Stopping is the second basic concept that has been identified as common to many games. This ability to stop is essential to the development of a safe and versatile mover. This ability like space use, develops after many carefully planned and executed learning experiences. Most children have little difficulty in coming to a controlled, safe stop. There are two basic foot positions for stopping; a) the stride and b) the two foot jump. The stride position while being more natural and therefore more simple is less useful in most game situations. In basketball for example a stride stop will by rule restriction determine the pivot foot and therefore restrict the direction of subsequent movement. Because of this limitation in stride stopping more emphasis is placed on the two footed jump stop. In order to fully develop the child's versatility in movement several experiences are planned which allow the children to explore, refine, and practice various movement patterns into and out of the two foot jump stop. These movement patterns are listed, in the sample learning experiences, examples are provided which indicate ways such ideas can be presented to elementary age children.

Learning Experiences--Concept #3 Stopping

1. Travel slowly and stop on both feet.
2. Travel quickly and stop on both feet quietly.
3. Have the children contrast what effect the stop has after moving quickly and slowly.
4. Have the children observe other children who use a stride stop and those who use a jump stop. Let the children experiment with both.
5. Move in different directions and do a two foot jump stop. Be certain that the stop is quiet.
6. Travel, execute a jump stop and then move off at a different level.
7. Travel, execute a jump stop and then pivot--in different directions on the right foot, on the left foot.
8. Travel, execute a jump stop and then take weight on your hands.
9. Travel, execute a jump stop and jump again immediately.
10. Travel, execute a jump stop and roll quietly.

Helpful Hints -- Stopping

1. One of the most important aspects of stopping is the development of the child's awareness for what he/she must do with his/her body to achieve a safe and controlled stop.
2. The requirement for quiet stopping has a two-fold purpose; a) it requires the child to limit his/her speed of movement, and b) it semi-assures that the child is employing flexion in the ankles and knees. Both points are important in gymnastics which will require safe landings from equipment. In games the transfer is into controlled movers who can avoid collisions.
3. Be certain that the children are coming to a complete stop prior to flight, weight on hands and rolls.
4. Look for those children who always tumble after the stop. They are usually members of the brave but reckless group and are displaying lower motoric development than their classmates.
5. Very young children have great difficulty in coming to a quick stop. If you give them a little warning such as "and-----stop" they will perform more successfully.

C. Concept #3 DODGING

The skill of dodging is fundamental to most team sports. Dodging is composed of advancing and retreating, direction changes, and turning. As with the previous two concepts the ability to dodge develops slowly and therefore children require lots of practice and time. Learning experiences for dodging should be thoughtfully planned to assure safety and the development of versatile dodgers. Initially children need to learn how to approach another mover and then move away without contact. This experience requires that the child have control over his/her own body in relation to speed. The use of speed changes in dodging is an additional step in development of the skill. Speed changes in dodging can involve varying the speed of retreat or the speed of approach or both. Children enjoy this activity and can soon be quite skillful at this level of dodging. When the sub-ideas of level and direction changes are blended with dodging the possibilities become endless. When developing learning experiences it is useful to carefully watch highly skilled individuals and then formulate a task which relates to the advanced form. For example, a wide receiver attempting to avoid the open field tackle must be an artful dodger and usually employs both direction and speed changes when performing the successful dodge. The highest form of dodging in most game forms is the fake and dodge. The fake and dodge provides one on one challenge and requires the use of speed, level, and direction changes. It is not expected or anticipated that the elementary child will look like a pro wide receiver--the transfer goal is however clear. The child who will never go on to become the artful dodger in sports may need the same skills to carry his/her lunch tray through the crowded lunch room.

Learning Experiences--Dodging

1. As you travel about the room come close to another person and then move away without touching.
2. As you travel move toward another person and then quickly move away.
3. As you move toward someone give a fake in one direction and move away in a different direction.
4. As you approach another person at one level shift levels and move quickly away.
5. Now approach give a fake and move away in a new direction and level.
6. Approach another person come to a jump stop pivot and move away.
7. Working with a partner approach each other, fake and try to get around each other--you should not contact the other person.

Helpful Hints--Concept #3 Dodging

1. Be certain that the children understand the purpose of the task. The purpose is not to touch otherwise you will have mass tag and chaos.
2. Keep the speed of travel slow until the children comprehend the task and are listening to directions.
3. Observe closely for the brave and reckless group. They can quickly turn this experience into ruin.
4. Add equipment which requires the children to remain attentive, i.e. balls for dribbling with feet or hands. This really keeps their attention and greatly increases the difficulty of the task.
5. The partner task at the end of the learning experiences develops both offensive and defensive skills in observation. The task should be done in this progression--both children without equipment, both children with equipment, and then one with equipment and one without. It would be wise not to make this task competitive. If you do expect bodily contact, but do not blame the children--you invited the trouble.

D. Concept #4 Partner SPACE AWARENESS

Partner space awareness can be viewed as one of the transition skills to skillful games playing. The concept of partner space awareness involves finding the moving partner in the moving class, maintaining an awareness for the partner's location and finally locating an open space for the partner which could be used as a reception point. As is apparent this concept is much more involved than the previous three. The first three concepts were individual skills. Partner space awareness requires that two or more individuals work cooperatively together to successfully complete a task. The goal of this concept is that each child learn to track each other and send an object to an open space near that person for subsequent reception. Successful performance in this concept requires well learned skills from the previous three concepts. The responsibility for success lies with both movers. The sender must know where the partner is and locate a feasible reception point. The receiver must look for and move into open spaces thus providing the sender with suitable reception targets. Once again visualize the skillful wide receiver who must scurry off the line and then provide the quarterback with an open target among the defensive secondary. In basketball accolades are given to the skillful passer who finds the open space--let's not forget however the necessity of the skillful receiver who has probably created the opening initially. It should be noted that despite the use of specific sport examples the intention of these experiences is to help children become skillful at their own developmental level. Most of these experiences can be practiced and learned without the element of competition.

It is the firm belief of the presenter that competition and learning do not mix. The initial stages of learning will be severely retarded if the element of competition is presented. Once the child has practiced the skill and feels confident in his/her performance the introduction of competition can be viewed as a challenge not as an insurmountable barrier. Another point to ponder is that since all children develop at their own rate they will not all be ready for the more advanced phases of these learning experiences at the same time. This reality indicates that ability planning and grouping is wise in elementary school physical education at certain points.

Learning Experiences--Partner Space Awareness

1. Find a partner. Begin moving in different directions away from each other and mingle with the other students. When I say stop quickly, point to your partner.
2. Both you and your partner should begin moving. As you move continuously, change directions and yet keep you eye on your partner. When I say stop, you should be pointing and looking at your partner.
3. Designate one partner as the mover. When I say go, that partner should begin moving. The non-moving partner should keep track of the partner and when I say stop, should point to the nearest open space available to the partner.
4. One partner has the ball. The other partner is the mover. The mover begins moving on the signal. When I say stop the other partner throws the ball to the open space closest to the partner.
5. The partners should decide upon a space in the room where the reception is to occur or a time period in which the reception is to occur. Then one partner begins to move and the other throws the ball to the target space if and only if the reception is still feasible.

Helpful Hints--Partner Space Awareness

1. Do not even attempt this concept until you are well aware of the movement capabilities of your children. The success of the experience relies upon the moving and stopping abilities of each child.
2. Keep the competition out of the experience. When the children are competent and confident you will see them utilize the concept in their own game play.
3. Watch the movers--they should be capable of arriving at open spaces without contacting other movers or non-movers.
4. When you involve equipment-the reception should occur in an open space ahead of the mover. This idea can be easily tied into sports and should be discussed with the children.

Concept Summary

Four general game concepts have been presented and discussed. These concepts were organized in a progression among concepts. In addition a progression within concepts was suggested. In actual implementation it is possible to select ideas from the first three concepts at a simple level. In other words one does not have to teach all levels of concept #1 prior to presenting ideas from concepts #2 and #3. Given that concept #4 relies so heavily upon the combined learnings in #1 through #3 it would be wise to save these experiences until moderate or advanced levels are reached in concepts 1 through 3.

The omission of manipulative skills in the discussion of the four concepts was intentional. The addition of manipulative skills provides the first floor level of skills for various games. The selection of these manipulative skills should rely on the abilities of the children with whom you work. In general, however, manipulative skills have an inherent hierarchy of difficulty which can be modified with the involvement of implements. For example, throwing and catching are fairly simple skills for middle to upper elementary children. If, however, an implement like a crosse is added the skills of throwing and catching become far more difficult.

There is a vast difference between teaching games skills and teaching specific games. As physical educators in the elementary school we need to think seriously about what and how we are preparing children for future game experiences. If we elect to teach specific games, i.e., street hockey, nucom, etc., then we have to realize that the specifics of these games may not form a firm foundation for the game and sport experiences that are presented in middle schools and high schools. If, however, the focus were on games skills that were common to several games and sports, the implication is clear for the children's future ventures into the sport world.

Equipment: Foam balls - one per student

Objectives: The student should be willing to...

- 1) ...share in the responsibility to maintain a safe environment by looking for and moving into open space
- 2) ...demonstrate the ability to dodge other people by avoiding contact throughout the lesson
- 3) ...demonstrate the ability to find an open space for another person by sending an object into open spaces for a partner
- 4) ...discuss the importance of moving into open spaces and sending objects into open spaces for sport settings.

Movement Tasks	Teaching Emphasis	Evaluation Questions
1. Scatter about the room in open spaces - now begin moving - always look for and go toward open spaces. Stop in an open space on the signal.	1. Be certain that everyone does have an open area. 2. Observe for those who move too closely to others. 3. When stopping, praise those who are in open spaces. 4. Do the students stop on their feet?	1. Do the same students always end in open spaces? In close spaces? 2. Do the students tend to move at a safe speed and stop in balanced positions?
2. Now as you move - approach another person and then move quickly away - move away at a new speed - move away at a different level - move away in a new direction.	1. Watch for contact - stop and discuss causes if you see it. 2. Watch for the hesitant movers who never approach others. 3. Look for individual variations of speed, level, direction.	1. Does each individual vary his/her actions? 2. Are the students moving at safe speeds? In open spaces and avoiding contact?
3. Quietly get a ball and begin sending and receiving it by yourself in an open space. Watch for others as you move. Come to a complete stop after each reception.	1. All of the above. 2. Look for those who are not sending the ball into open areas. 3. Look for those who send the ball too far for reception.	1. Are the students able to send and receive in open spaces? 2. Are the students able to match sending distance and reception speed for successful catches?
4. Working with a partner, begin sending and receiving the ball. Be certain to send the ball in an open space ahead of your partner. Come to a complete stop after the catch.	1. Look for the stop after the catch. 2. Watch for the placement of the throws. 3. Watch for safe spacing.	1. Are the students sending into open spaces? 2. Are the students stopping after the receptions?

5. Working with a partner, the sender should stop, then point, and send the ball into an open space. The receiver should catch the ball, stop, and roll.

1. Look for clear space location by the sender. 2. Look for receiver moving without contact to open spaces. 3. Look for the stop and roll after the reception.

1. Are the senders accurately judging space and speed of the throws? 2. Are the students successfully sending/receiving, stopping and rolling?